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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

4 JUN 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
Director, United States Arms
Control and Disarmament Agency
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

SUBJECT : Public Disclosure of Classified
Intelligence Information

1. In keeping with my statutory responsibilities for the protection of intelligence sources and methods, I have observed with growing concern the increasing resort to public disclosure of classified intelligence information. Despite the President's injunction of 21 December 1970 urging caution in the public release of classified information, the frequency of such disclosures has reached alarming levels.

2. I have attached as an annex to this memorandum a partial chronology of significant disclosures of classified intelligence information in 1971. This annex illustrates clearly that although any single disclosure may not seem critical, the cumulative impact of this practice is quite sobering.

3. I fully appreciate the occasional temptation to use intelligence information to foster public support of policies in such matters as weapons programs and arms control. But I would be remiss in my obligations if I did not point out that whatever the short-term gains, this

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practice may well jeopardize our ability to provide the intelligence support required for formulating defense policy and monitoring arms control over the longer term.

4. This flood of public disclosures of classified information gives the USSR and other foreign powers keen insights into the capabilities and limitations of our intelligence system. It also tends to undermine the attitude toward security at all levels of Government which in turn encourages more disclosures for clarification and elaboration. The inevitable result of these disclosures could be a sharp curtailment of the effectiveness, if not the disappearance, of some of our most important intelligence sources.

5. The objective of this memorandum is to alert you to this potential danger and to enlist your cooperation in eliminating any further public disclosures which can only damage our intelligence posture.

/s/ Richard Helms

Richard Helms
Director

Attachment

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